

ANDAfter this, thanne shul ye kepe yow in swich manere, that for any presumpcioun of youre strengthe, that ye ne dispise nat ne acounte nat the myght of youre adversarie so litel, that ye lete the keepyng of youre persone for youre presumpcioun; for every wys man dredeth his enemy; and Salomon seith, *Useful* is he that of alle hath drede; for certes, he that thurgh the hardynesse of his herte, & thurgh the hardynesse of hymself, hath to greet presumpcioun, hym shal yvel bityde. *Thanne* shul ye everemoore countrewayte embussheiments & alle espaille, for Senec seith: that The wise man that dredeth harmes escheweth harmes; ne he ne fall eth into perils that perils escheweth. And, albeit so that it seme that thou art in siker place, yet shaltow alwey do thy diligence in keepyng of thy persone; this is to seyn, ne be nat negligent to kepe thy persone; nat oonly fro thy gretteste enemys, but fro thy leeste enemy. Senec seith, *A* man that is wel avysed, he dredeth his leeste enemy. *Ovyde* seith: that The litel wesele wol slee the grete bole and the wilde hert. And the book seith, *A* litel thorn may prikke a greet kyng ful soore; and an hound wol holde the wilde boor.

BUT natheles, I sey nat thou shalt be so coward, that thou doute ther wher as is no drede. The book seith: that Somme folk han greet lust to deceyve, but yet they dreden hem to be deceyved. Yet shaltow drede to been empoisoned, & kepe yow from the compaignye of scorneres; for the book seith, *With* scornere make no compaignye, but flech hire wordes as venym.

NOw as to the seconde point; whereas yow to warnestooore youre hous with gret diligence, I wolde fayn knowe, how that ye understonde thilke wordes, and what is youre sentence.

MELIBEUS answerde and seyde, *Certes*, I understande it in this wise: That I shal warnestooore myn hous with toures, swiche as han castelles and othere manere edifices, and armure & artelries, by whiche thynges I may my persone & myn hous so kepen & defenden, that myne enemys shul been in drede myn hous for to approche.

Othis sentence answerde anon Prudence, *Warnestoooryng*, quod she, of heighe toures and of grete edifices appertaineth somtyme to pryde; and eek men make heigh toures and grete edifices with grete costages and with greet travaille; and whan that they been accomplished, yet be they nat worth a stree, but if they be defended by trewe freendes that been olde &

wise. And understood wel, that the gretteste and strongeste garnyson that a rich man may have, as wel to kepen his persone as his goodes, is that he be biloved amonges his subgets and with his neighbores; for thus seith Tullius: that Ther is a manere garnysoun that no man may venquyse ne disconfit, and that is, a lord to be biloved of his citezeins and of his peple.

NOw sire, as to the thridde point; whereas youre olde and wise conseilours seyden, that yow ne oughte nat sodeynly ne hastily proceden in this nede, but that yow oughte purveyen and appaill yow in this caas with greet diligence and greet deliberacioun; trewely, I trowe that they seyden right wisely & right sooth, for Tullius seith, *In* every nede, er thou bigynne it, appaill thee with greet diligence. *Thanne* seye I, that in vengeance taking, in werre, in bataille, and in warnestoooryng, er thou bigynne, I rede that thou appaill thee therto, and do it with greet deliberacioun; for Tullius seith: that, *Longe* apparaillyng biforn the bataille maketh short victorie. *And* Casidorus seith, *The* garnyson is stronger whan it is longe tyme avysed.

BUT now lat us speken of the conseil that was accorded by youre neighbores, swiche as doon yow reverence withouten love, youre olde enemys reconciled, youre flatereres, that consailed yow certeyne thynges prively, and openly consaileden yow the contrarie; the yonge folk also, that consaileden yow to venge yow, and make werre anon. And certes, sire, as I have seyde biforn, ye han greetly erred to han cleped swich manere folk to youre conseil; which conseilours been ynogh repreved by the resouns aforesayd.

BUT natheles, lat us now descende to the special. Ye shuln first procede after the doctrine of Tullius. Certes, the trouthe of this matiere, or of this conseil, nedeth nat diligently enquire; for it is wel wist whiche they been that handoon to yow this trespass and vileynye, and how manye trespassours, and in what manere they han to yow doon al this wrong and al this vileynye. And after this, thanne shul ye examyne the seconde condicioun which that the same Tullius addeth in this matiere, for Tullius put a thyng which that he clepeth Consentynge, this is to seyn; who been they, and how manye, and whiche been they, that consenteden to thy conseil, in thy wilfulnesse to doon hastif vengeance. And lat us considere also who been they, & how manye been they, & whiche been they, that consenteden to youre adversaries. *And* certes, as to the firste poynt, it is wel knownen whiche folk been they that consenteden

to youre hastif wilfulnesse; for trewely, alle tho that consaileden yow to maken sodeyn werre, ne been nat youre freendes.

AT us now considere whiche been they that ye holde so greetly youre freendes as to youre persone; for albeit so that ye be myghty and riche, certes, ye ne been nat but alone, for certes, ye ne han no child but a doghter; ne ye ne han bretheren, ne cosyns germainys, ne noon oother neigh kynrede, wherfore that youre enemys, for drede, sholde stinte to plete with yow, or to destroye youre persone. Ye knowen also, that youre richesses mooten been dispendid in diverse parties; and whan that every wight hath his part, they ne wollen taken but litel reward to venge thy deeth. *But* thyne enemys been thre, and they han manie children, bretheren, cosyns, and oother ny kynrede; & though so were that thou haddest slayn of hem two or thre, yet dwellen ther ynowe to wreken hir deeth, and to sle thy persone. And though so be that youre kynrede be moore siker and stedefast than the kyn of youre adversarie, yet natheles, youre kynrede nys but a fer kynrede; they been but litel syb to yow, and the kyn of youre enemys been ny syb to hem; and certes, as in that, hir condicioun is bet than yours.

THANNE lat us considere also of the consaillyng of hem that consaileden yow to taken sodeyn vengeance, whether it accorde to resoun. And certes, ye knowe wel Nay, for as by right & resoun, ther may no man taken vengeance on no wight, but the juge that hath the jurisdiction of it, whan it is graunted hym to take thilke vengeance, hastily or attemprely, as the lawe requireth. And yet mooreover, of thilke word that Tullius clepeth Consentynge, thou shalt considere if thy myght and thy power may consenten and suffise to thy wilfulnesse and to thy conseilours. And certes, thou mayst wel seyn that Nay, for sikerly, as for to speke proprely, we may donothyng, but oonly swich thyng as we may doon rightfully; and certes, rightfully ne mowe ye take no vengeance, as of youre propre auctoritee.

THANNE mowe ye seen that youre power ne consenteth nat ne accordeth nat with youre wilfulnesse.

AT us now examyne the thridde point, that Tullius clepeth Consequent. Thou shalt understonde that the vengeance that thou purposost for to take is the consequent; & therof folweth another vengeance, peril, & werre; & othere damages withoute nombre, of whiche we be nat war as at this tyme. And as touchyng the fourthe point, that Tullius clepeth

Engendrynge, thou shalt considere, that this wrong which that is doon to thee is engendred of the hate of thyne enemys; & of the vengeance takinge upon that, wolde engendre another vengeance, & muchel sorwe and wastynge of richesses, as I seyde.

NOw sire, as to the point that Tullius clepeth Causes, which that is the laste point, thou shalt understonde that the wrong that thou hast receyved hath certeyne causes, whiche that clerkes clepen Oriens and Efficiens, & Causa longinqua and Causa propinqua; this is to seyn, the fer cause and the ny cause. The fer cause is Almyghty God, that is cause of alle thynges; the neer cause is thy thre enemys. The cause accidental was hate; the cause material been the fyve woundes of thy doghter. The cause formal is the manere of hir werkynge, that broghten laddres & cloumben in at thy wyndowes. The cause final was for to slee thy doghter; it letted nat inasmuche as in hem was.

BUT for to speken of the fer cause, as to what ende they shul come, or what shal finally bityde of hem in this caas, ne kan I nat deme but by conjectyng and by supposyng. For we shul suppose that they shul come to a wikked ende, bycause that the Book of Decrees seith, *Seelden*, or with greet peyne, been causes ybrought to good ende whanne they been baddely bigonne.

NOw sire, if men wolde axe me, why that God suffred men to do yow this vileynye, certes, I kan nat wel answer as for no soothfastnesse; for tha postle seith, that the Sciences and the juggements of oure Lord God Almyghty been ful depe, ther may no man comprehend ne serchen hem suffisantly. Natheles, by certeyne presumpciouns and conjectynges, I holde and bileeve, that God, which that is ful of justice & of rightwisnesse, hath suffred this bityde by juste cause resonable.

THY name is Melibee, this is to seyn, *A* man that drynketh hony. Thou hast ydronke so muchel hony of sweete temporeel richesses, and delices and honours of this world, that thou art dronken, and hast forgotten Jhesu Crist, thy creatour; thou ne hast nat doon to hym swich honour and reverence as thee oughte; ne thou ne hast nat wel ytaken kepe to the wordes of Ovide, that seith, *Under* the hony of the goodes of the body is hyd the venym that sleeth the soule. *And* Salomon seith, *If* thou hast founden hony, etc of it that suffiseth; for if thou etc of it out of mesure, thou shalt spewe, and be nedy and povre. *And* peraventure Crist hath thee in despit, and hath turned away